

correct English, or a confession on the part of the writer, in that it indicates that he cannot write good English. Emphasis can be accomplished by better means than italicizing. Good, clear writing should do it with more thoroughness than any slanting letters or underscoring marks.

There is in many cases a downright impertinence in the organizations and schemes to develop certain lines of church activity and life. Some pastors are beginning to resent the "butting in" of all kinds of advisers. Faithful pastors usually know their own people much better than outsiders know them, and are conscientiously and successfully doing their work without following the devices that outsiders are with so much assurance thrusting upon them. Advice giving is a very cheap kind of Christian work, and there is danger that we may employ too many men to engage in the business.

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL.

A study of the results of the recent Federal Council shows very little to warrant all the sentiment and expectation that revolved about that great gathering. It was an assembly of choice men, full of zeal, eminent in the councils of their several churches, capable of doing whatever was possible to be done in such a body. The spirit characterizing the meeting was perfect, in its breadth, charity, wisdom, adaptability. The prestige of thirty-four denominations sustained the accordant principles and the declarations of their chosen representatives. And yet, what came out of it? Nothing that would bind, of course. That was not looked for. No legislative or administrative power was given to the body by any of its constituent parts. The effect was to be only moral, the power of the truth and of united testimony, together with the force of any new truth that might be discovered if such were possible. But did the Council contribute anything of this kind that had not been given before? Did it offer anything new to stimulate the mind and heart of the Church at large?

So far as one can see, the chief feature of the conference was the bearing of its discussions and papers, and in a certain sense the testimony of its constituent churches upon the social side of the Church and of religion. The Church and the labor problem, the Church and the immigrants, the Church and modern industry, the Church and international relations, war, peace, and the like, the Church and temperance, Sunday observance, family life and education, were the leading topics. The great function of the Church as a witness for Christ the Mediator, as God's agent in the world to call men to repentance, as the body of God's elect organized to edify the saints and propagate the faith, seemed to be in the background. Naturally on certain phases of this all could not agree, and it was needful to consider only topics upon which the divergence of doctrine would not appear. And this is at once the danger and the trouble with all such gatherings. Much of principle and of duty must be sunk from sight in order to make what is

left of any special value. The sacrifice must be made to secure such a convention and unity in its action, but the price is a very heavy one for the recompense received.

It is never wise to obscure the great principle of witness bearing. Least of all should the Church lend herself to any devices, no matter how grand and multitudinous and brotherly they may appear, which take her off that safe ground. The world will hearken to her in her divine message only so long as it recognizes her as devoting herself to that message. Her relation to the world as a benefactor of the world in its social, industrial, governmental, literary and other conditions is only incidental, gloriously happy and surely resultant, but still only incidental to her relation to it as the proclaimer of a way of life to the guilty and condemned, as the bride of Christ commissioned of her Lord to offer to all who will believe a means of attaining to the best of the life that now is and of that which is to come through their acceptance of a crucified Redeemer. Let her adhere to this mission and duty, and the rest will come of itself.

NOTES IN PASSING.

By Bert.

A happy New Year to all my readers. To many thousands of our fellow citizens this is not going to be a new year, but the same old year with a new number. A new suit of clothes does not make a new man, neither does a change of number make a new year. Many, sad to say, will foist upon this present year all the sins and follies of the year just passed accentuated by the growing strength of confirmed habit, and at the end of the year, looking back upon the evils they have brought upon themselves, will call the year by hard names as if it were to blame. If this is to be indeed a new year, it will take more than the substitution of 9 for 8 to make it so. A really new year is one marked by the birth of new motives, the diligent prosecution of new ideals, the bringing into play of new spiritual powers undreamed of heretofore, the earnest forward pushing of the whole man into the thick of the fight for truth and righteousness. A new year begins any time. Not the birth of a month, but the birth of a soul marks an opening year; and yet there is something in the coming of the first of January that seems to set that date out as a fit and proper time for a long, strong step forward. Let us take it.

Whether or not this is to be a happy year will depend not upon our outward, but upon our inward experiences. Nothing can shake the happiness of the soul which trusts in God. But as the beacon shines the clearer the darker the night, so his blessedness becomes the more apparent in the stress of life. If you would be sure of a happy new year, my friends, let the love of God fill and inspire you. Cultivate the things of first importance. Refuse to be discouraged. Remember that above the clouds the sun is always shining and will break through the thickest of them always at the very moment of your greatest need.